



Mr. RAHMAN: Yes.

LAUER: Do you personally feel that suicide bombings or homicide bombings, as they're being called now, are a viable tool to be used by the Palestinians in this conflict?

Mr. RAHMAN: I am opposed to violence, to--to suicide bombing on more than one ground. I'm opposed to it morally. I'm opposed to it politically. I am opposed to it because it targets civilians. I'm opposed to it because of what it does to our society...

LAUER: In a recent...

Mr. RAHMAN: ...but that does not, if you allow me, that does not explain it. What explains suicide bombing is the desperation that is created by Israel in the Palestinian society.

LAUER: And that's the point I want to make, because in a recent interview published, Mrs. Arafat, Yasser Arafat's wife, said that in--in some ways she thinks the bombings are a legitimate resistance against Israeli occupation. She said if she had a son, there would be no greater honor than to sacrifice him for the Palestinian cause. What's your reaction to that?

Mr. RAHMAN: Well, I did not read the--the quote, and I'm not going to comment on something that I have not seen or have not heard. That's not really proper for me. But I express my views, and I believe that this is the views of many Palestinians. But we have to look at how Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories over 36 years turned many Palestinians into violence. You know, I blame the Israelis for creating a culture of violence in a society that was not violent. Occupation is--is a system of terror...

LAUER: In--in...

Mr. RAHMAN: ...because it deprives Palestinians of their very basic freedoms and very basic dignity. It humiliates them. It...

LAUER: In just 10 seconds left, if I can...

Mr. RAHMAN: Yes.

LAUER: Prime Minister Sharon has called for some kind of a summit meeting similar to the Madrid summit back in the early '90s. Do you think that would

Page 369
NBC News Transcripts April 15, 2002 Monday
work? Briefly, if you will.

Mr. RAHMAN: That's a gimmick because he is saying he's trying to escape forward. There's a situation on the ground today; Mr. Sharon has to deal with it. He has to withdraw his troops, so we can start the political process.

LAUER: **Hasan Abdel Rahman.** Mr. Rahman, thank you very much.

Mr. RAHMAN: Thank you, sir.

LAUER: It's 12 past the hour. Here's Katie.

KATIE COURIC, co-host:

Matt, thank you.

LOAD-DATE: April 15, 2002

SHOW: CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00

April 14, 2002 Sunday

Transcript # 041400CN.V42

SECTION: News; International

LENGTH: 7336 words

HEADLINE: Is Middle East Peace Possible?

GUESTS: Hasan Abdel Rahman, George Mitchell, Alon Pinkas, Bob Schieffer

BYLINE: Larry King

HIGHLIGHT:

Panel discusses crisis in the Middle East.

BODY:

THIS IS A RUSH TRANSCRIPT. THIS COPY MAY NOT BE IN ITS FINAL FORM AND MAY BE UPDATED.

LARRY KING, HOST: Tonight, Colin Powell meets with Yasser Arafat and Ariel Sharon, separate talks, so far no solutions. With each side saying the other is in the wrong, is Mideast peace possible?

Joining us: Ambassador Alon Pinkas, the Israeli consul general in New York;

Hasan Abdel Rahman, the chief Palestinian representative in the United States; former Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, architect of a plan for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; and my man, Bob Schieffer, narrator of "Face the Nation" and CBS News chief Washington correspondent. They're all next on a live edition of LARRY KING WEEKEND.

Usually, our Saturday and Sunday shows are pre-taped. Tonight, we are live for obvious reasons. We have an outstanding panel, and I might add that Bob Schieffer will not only be asked questions, but he can participate with questions if he wishes as well, and I'll start with Senator Mitchell, OK.

Colin Powell meets with both men today. He's going to other areas tomorrow.

Page 371

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday

Your plan is front and center from the Bush administration. Where are we, George?

GEORGE MITCHELL, FORMER SENATE MAJORITY LEADER: Well, let's hope we're in the beginning of a process that will produce implementation of first a cease-fire and then prompt movement into further steps and negotiations. It's obviously impossible to know, at least I don't know, what was said behind the closed doors at the meetings with Arafat and Sharon, but I think the secretary deserves a lot of credit for making what is a very, very determined effort in an extremely difficult situation.

KING: Anything you see today, senator, that makes you optimistic?

MITCHELL: Well, just the fact that they're still going, the fact that it hasn't ended. There was obviously a process of discussion between Powell and Arafat and their aides over the statement by Arafat. Secretary Powell deemed that sufficient to justify the meeting which followed, so the mere fact that the process is ongoing.

Larry, I recall in Northern Ireland, we went for two years and we had many, many days when it looked like it was over and we regarded it as a great success just to be still in talks, still keep going. I think that's what's needed now, patience and perseverance.

KING: Bob Schieffer, we've had no homicide bombings in the past two days. Are you encouraged by that and generally encouraged by today's events?

BOB SCHIEFFER, CBS "FACE THE NATION": Well, I would generally agree with what Senator Mitchell just said. It seems to me that at least things went well enough today that they have decided to have the staff members meet tomorrow and talk some more.

You know, the old thing about every journey begins with one small step, perhaps every negotiation begins with at least a few words, and I think that's what we saw happen today. I mean, this thing has gone to the point where the United States may be the only power left. Somebody said the other day, we're not just a super power, we're a super duper power now.

And now that Colin Powell is deeply involved, I think it's the right way to go. This has gotten to the point, it is so serious that the United States I think, Larry, has to risk failure to try to get the two sides to separate and at least start talking. Maybe the talking started today. We'll see what comes after it.

KING: Hasan Rahman, the chief Palestinian representative, have you spoken with Mr. Arafat or anyone close to him today?

HASAN ABDEL RAHMAN, CHIEF PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATOR: No, I spoke to members of our delegation who participated in the discussions.

KING: And what did they tell you?

RAHMAN: They were very pleased with the discussion that took place, the candid, frank, touched on all the issues. But unfortunately, Secretary Powell
Page 372

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday
came to the meeting empty-handed. He did not come up with the timetable for Israel withdrawal. On the contrary, while he was sitting with President Arafat in the meeting, Sharon was ordering his troops to move into more cities and towns.

This does not reflect very well on the credibility of the United States, because after all, it is the United States who is going to deliver. After two weeks since the day that the United States proposed in the Security Council for Resolution 1402 and the president said, "I call on Sharon to heed my demand that he hold the invasion and withdraw his troops," Sharon is still continuing the invasion.

KING: So are you saying, Mr. Rahman, that nothing fruitful happened in the meeting with Arafat today?

RAHMAN: No. There was many things fruitful as far as our readiness to work with Mr. Colin Powell to make the process move forward. But he did not bring a commitment from Israel to implement the resolution of the Security Council.

KING: Ambassador Pinkas, have you spoken with either Prime Minister Sharon or anyone who was present at the meetings between Sharon and Powell?

AMBASSADOR ALON PINKAS, ISRAELI COUNSEL GENERAL: Yes I have, Larry.

KING: And what can you tell us?

PINKAS: Well, my understanding was that Mr. Sharon, Prime Minister Sharon was trying his best to facilitate a successful mission for Colin Powell, for Secretary Powell. I think they discussed several modalities for the upcoming days and weeks. They discussed both the military operation and the political process that hopefully will resume at some point after this operation is accomplished, or after it is completed.

And I think that, you know, from our point of view, Secretary Powell can not fail in this mission. I mean, I've heard many people assess his mission as either doomed to fail or impossible. That, I think, is very unhelpful. Any way you look at this mission, I think Secretary Powell's chances of success are larger than the possibility of failing.

KING: What do you make...

PINKAS: If he comes up...

KING: What do you make of Mr. Rahman's statement that Powell brought nothing to give from the Israeli side?

PINKAS: I think you have to ask Secretary Powell what it was that he was intending to bring, what it was that he expected?

KING: What President Bush had asked the Israelis to do.

PINKAS: President Bush asked us to withdraw immediately, which is something that we're doing in the context of the military operation in certain areas of the West Bank. I think that Secretary Powell is privy to information,

Page 373

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday
irrefutable evidence of that showing direct link between Arafat and the mobsters around him to terror activity.

We found 20 missiles in a mosque. We found documents implicating Arafat and

some of his lieutenants in signing checks and ordering homicide bombings. Powell, of all people, a former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, understands the complexity of this, understands the military necessity to complete this. There won't be a political process, but you can not resume a viable and durable political process. Unless you dismantle this infrastructure, it's impossible.

KING: All right. Senator Mitchell, who gives first?

MITCHELL: Well, I think that what Secretary Powell is trying to do, of course, is create a situation where both parties move simultaneously back toward negotiation, and I hope that he's able to do that. It's obviously very difficult because there is, as everyone knows, total mistrust, disbelief of what the other side says, and so it's a hard thing to do, but I think he's in the process of trying to organize that now, simultaneous action.

KING: When you're sitting as you have between two people that distrust each other, as you did in many occasions in your life, both of less importance maybe in the U.S. Senate, and of major importance in Ireland and Britain, what does the middle person do when the two sides don't trust each other?

MITCHELL: Tries to create a framework or a climate within which they can at least have a discussion of the issues, can state their views fully and frankly, and hopefully attempt to recognize that they have a common interest. In this case, while it's obviously hard to see through all of the terrible death and destruction that's occurred in recent weeks, the two sides have a common interest.

Life has become unbearable for Israeli citizens, and life is unbearable for the Palestinians. They have a common interest in ending that and getting back to some semblance of a normal life, and I think they have to try in that position to drive that home that there's a lot that divides you. You don't like each other, but you got to work together to get that common end.

KING: I'll take a break and come back. We'll ask if it would be much better for the interlocker if the parties were together with him, and then we'll ask Bob Schieffer some and then Mr. Schieffer can chime in with questions of our three guests as well. You're watching a special live edition of LARRY KING WEEKEND. We'll be right back.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

COLIN POWELL, SECRETARY OF STATE: I've just completed a useful and constructive exchange with Chairman Arafat and the members of his staff, and we exchanged a variety of ideas and discussed steps on how we can move forward, and members of my staff will be meeting with member of his staff again.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

Page 374

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday

KING: Senator Mitchell, rather than shuttle diplomacy, isn't the interlocker better off if both parties are with him?

MITCHELL: Not at this time, Larry. I think it would be a mistake to try to bring Prime Minister Sharon and Chairman Arafat together. I think meetings can occur between the two sides at a lesser level, staff level, perhaps some security cooperation, but that's a matter of timing and judgment.

I think right now a meeting would be counterproductive if it could occur at all, which I think frankly it could not at this moment. So I think it's a process by which you start at one level and you work your way up and you only bring the leaders together when I think there is some reasonable prospect of it being a productive meeting.

KING: Bob, last night on this program we repeated a program we did on our

10th anniversary in June of '95, which featured Yitzhak Rabin, Yasser Arafat, and King Hussein, all on together for the full hour. It was kind of historic. Peace seemed very close at hand, and we still don't have it. Why not?

SCHIEFFER: Well, if I knew the answer to that, Larry, I suppose we could resolve all of this tonight.

KING: Anoint you.

SCHIEFFER: But I think this is one of the great tragedies here, because think of the great advances that were made. We got to Camp David. Up until that time, Egypt was seen as a major threat to Israel. Jordan was seen as a threat. We signed the Camp David -- the Camp David accords were signed and then Egypt was no longer seen, it was sort of removed from the equation, and we moved on to something else. And now, you see everything kind of breaking down and everything could come apart as a result of this.

Let me just ask Mr. Rahman a question, Larry.

KING: Sure.

SCHIEFFER: He said that Colin Powell came armed with nothing, or came and offered nothing today. Now earlier today, Rich Armitage, who is Mr. Powell's deputy, said that one of the things that Colin Powell said when he talked to Mr. Arafat today was, he said he asked him to use his bully pulpit to condemn violence, and to speak out more strongly than he has in the past. Now we know he made a statement yesterday, but I would just like to ask him, is Mr. Arafat going to do that or what can we expect from him, Mr. Rahman?

RAHMAN: I don't think that Yasser Arafat has any problem in doing that, but the question is, how can Yasser Arafat address his people today, as we speak here, when you have over 1,000 Israeli tanks in the Palestinian territories? When you have over 50,000 Israeli soldiers moving in all cities and towns of the West Bank and Gaza?

When mothers can not buy children food, can not go to the street to buy milk for their children? When people can not bury their dead? When the whole infrastructure of the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian society has been

Page 375
CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday
vengefully destroyed?

I mean telephone calls, roads have been dug, water pipes have been destroyed, everything by Israel, and the Palestinians are subject to attack today as we speak here. What can Yasser Arafat tell his people?

That's why I thought that had Secretary Powell brought to Arafat today a commitment from Mr. Sharon to halt the invasion and a timetable for withdrawal of the Israeli troops, Yasser Arafat and the Palestinians were ready and continue to be ready to do their share of the...

KING: In view of that definitive statement, Ambassador Pinkas, why not do that?

PINKAS: Well, Yasser Arafat had seven years worth of a peace process.

KING: But that's history. Why not today do that?

PINKAS: Larry, I beg to differ. It's not history. It goes to the heart of the matter of a deficient and inadequate leader that can not stand up and denounce and renounce and condemn violence. His credibility is no longer questioned. I think we've resolved about his credibility. It's non-existent. Now, you want me to answer about today and tomorrow. It's very simple. We don't trust Yasser Arafat to deliver on his promise. We have signed...

KING: What's the point then of Powell doing -- of Mr. Powell doing anything? If you don't trust and he don't trust you and you don't trust him, all this is moot, right?

PINKAS: Well, not necessarily, because there are other people and there are

mechanisms that could still be resurrected or reinstated or reestablished that could insure a cease-fire. Now, Yasser Arafat had time before this invasion to stand up and condemn violence, to make that speech in Arabic, not in English, dispense with the bilingualism, stand up and say, "I will not tolerate suicide bombers."

KING: He said that yesterday.

PINKAS: No, he did not. He said something some differently, although that statement that he said was good that he made it. But it took him seven years to make that statement. What stops him from looking up to Mr. Sadat, the President of Egypt and standing up and saying something very simple, "no more war, no more bloodshed." He's never said that, never ever.

KING: Senator Mitchell.

RAHMAN: Can I say something?

KING: Quickly, Mr. Rahman, yes.

RAHMAN: First of all, obviously Mr. Pinkas does not take yes for an answer, and he continues to engage in name calling, which I try to avoid tonight. I have so many names to describe Mr. Sharon and the Israeli government, starting
Page 376

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday
from (UNINTELLIGIBLE), continuing into everything war crimes that...

KING: But you're not going to do that, so all right.

RAHMAN: But I'm not going to do that because I am looking forward.

PINKAS: Very considerate of you.

RAHMAN: We want to get tonight if we can to something constructive, something positive, because we want Mr. Colin Powell to succeed for the sake of our people and for the sake of the Israeli people and for the sake of our region.

KING: All right. Let me get a break. We'll come right back with more of George Mitchell, Bob Schieffer, Chief Palestinian Representative Rahman, and Israeli Counsel General Pinkas on this special live edition of LARRY KING WEEKEND. Also, going to go to your calls momentarily. Don't go away.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SAEB ERAKAT, CHIEF PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATOR: I think the discussions were constructive and that we dealt with all kinds of issues and we fully committed to implementation of Resolution 1402 that calls for the immediate withdrawal of Israeli forces.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Senator Mitchell, what's the purpose of the Powell trips to other places, Syria and Lebanon?

MITCHELL: Well, obviously to tell them that the United States views with great concern the possible escalation on the northern border of Israel, and the potential that that has in combination with the ongoing conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians to trigger a much wider conflict, and I think it's appropriate that he does so and I hope very much that his words are heeded.

KING: If Ambassador Pinkas and Representative Rahman are examples of let's say Sharon and Arafat, as well they are, wouldn't you say, George, that this is one heck of a task?

MITCHELL: Well, it's obviously one heck of a task, Larry, but there is no such thing as a conflict that can't be ended, and I repeat what I said before, the result of this has been devastating to both societies.

Several months ago on my last visit, both Sharon and Arafat separately said to me, life has become unbearable for our people. This must end. And if there's one thing I know about the two of them, they don't coordinate their messages, so they were two completely separate expressions of precisely the same point of

view, and I think both recognize and accept that there is no military solution to this conflict. There has to be a negotiation at some point.

KING: Bob Schieffer, does it seem to you as a terrific journalist, that if both sides are at the end of their rope and both sides say we can't continue, Page 377

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday
one of them has to make some sort of statesman-like move?

SCHIEFFER: Well, somebody's going to have to do something because that's what's so different this time around. Always before, the Middle East flares up and then somebody has a truce and somebody works on a plan. This time, it seems impossible to just get the shooting stopped.

I asked Mr. Rahman a question. I'd like to ask Ambassador Pinkas a question, and that would be, what could the Israelis do at this point as some sort of sign of confidence? You say -- do I understand you correctly that you believe it is impossible now to deal with Mr. Arafat, and if you can't do that, then what do you do? Who do you negotiate with? That's the part that's very difficult for me to understand.

PINKAS: Well, it's -- well truthfully, Bob, it's something that we find difficult to understand because it's a vexing dilemma that we face every day, ever since Camp David.

Basically at Camp David, we gave up on Mr. Arafat as a political partner because the offer that was put on the table by then President Bill Clinton and then Prime Minister of Israel Barak, was basically 96 percent of the contiguous piece of land with some presence in Jerusalem, with a fair and equitable solution to the issue of Palestinian refugees.

They could come and live in the Palestinian state, with settlement blocks and borders and international recognition with the international community investing billions of dollars in creating an educational system and infrastructure, all those things that the Palestinian Authority neglected to deal with and rather used the money to arm itself or for corrupt causes.

Now, what needs to be done from now on is exactly the problem that we're facing. We want to reach a cease-fire, after which we want to resume political negotiations. However, nothing of value, nothing of lasting and durable value can be achieved with Mr. Arafat. We're trying to make that clear to everyone. If Secretary Powell still has faith that something can be achieved with Arafat, then by all means try and you know what? I'll be pleasantly surprised if he emerges and says we can cut a deal with Arafat. Somehow, I doubt that. Having said that, Bob, I agree with what you said before. I agree with what Senator Mitchell said. There won't be a military solution. It has to be political. It's going to probably be along the lines of what has been discussed, what had been discussed at Camp David a mere year and a half ago. In order to reach that point, we have the Mitchell Plan. We have its introduction, the George Tenet Plan, and we will do that. The demographics, the geography makes it imperative for us to reach that solution.

KING: Mr. Rahman, we have George Mitchell right here. Does Arafat like the Mitchell Plan?

RAHMAN: We endorsed it and we accept it and we are willing to implement it, but let me say something about, I hope once and for all responding to Mr. Pinkas' distortions of the facts about Camp David.

Page 378

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday

In Camp David what was offered to the Palestinians was not 97 percent you know that. What was offered, 97 percent was Clinton's proposal, which was in December but not in July during the Camp David. In Camp David, there were four

issues that we disagreed on.

One is the territory, Jerusalem, the refugees and the settlements and the boundaries, in fact five. We left Camp David and we continued negotiations, Mr. Pinkas. I myself participated at least in five rounds of negotiations here in Washington between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We did not stop negotiations in Camp David.

In fact, the negotiations continued until January 26th and there was a joint statement issued between the Israeli delegation and the Palestinian delegation. (UNINTELLIGIBLE) and (UNINTELLIGIBLE), in which they said that the achieved progress in (UNINTELLIGIBLE), and they would return to the negotiations after the Israel elections.

When Mr. Sharon was elected, he did not want to come back to the negotiating table. So why do you continue to distort the fact, Mr. Pinkas? I hope that one day on this television or on this network, you will tell the truth even once. So please, let's leave this behind this. We are ready to continue the negotiations with Israel from (UNINTELLIGIBLE).

KING: All right, now he is saying that, Ambassador Pinkas. Do you also accept the Mitchell Plan?

PINKAS: Of course we accept the Mitchell Plan.

KING: All right, you both accept it. Why isn't it in fact, and George Bush supports it, why isn't it operative?

PINKAS: Because there's one impediment to the Mitchell Plan, to the implementation of the Mitchell Plan and that impediment is called Yasser Arafat. Now, I really don't want to ...

KING: A person affects a plan?

PINKAS: A person affects a plan. When a person is a leader, when a person is a dictator who's not exactly up for reelection, when a person makes Tony Soprano look like Mother Teresa, if you look at what we found in the last three weeks, then you know that that person is a serious impediment to any implementation of a serious plan like the Mitchell Plan is.

KING: All right. Hold on. Senator Mitchell, what do you make of that?

MITCHELL: Well, Larry, I'm flattered that everybody liked my plan -

KING: Maybe Bob Schieffer likes it too.

MITCHELL: But I'm disheartened of course that no action has been taken toward it. It does though raise the question of implementation of the very first step, which is the cessation of violence and a series of steps to enable them to get into negotiation. That's the difficult part.

Page 379

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday

When I went there, Larry, quite a while ago now, I was of the view that the most difficult issues to resolve would be those, which Mr. Alon and the Palestinian Ambassador have just mentioned, refugees, Jerusalem, settlements, land. I'm now of the view that those can be resolved, but the most difficult step is the first one, getting an end to violence in this atmosphere of violence, emotion, deep mistrust, which you heard expressed here this evening by the two representatives.

KING: All right. Let me get a break. When we come back, we'll take phone calls. I'm going to ask Bob Schieffer, is this more a personal thing between two men. This is LARRY KING WEEKEND, a live version of LARRY KING WEEKEND, more on the Middle East tomorrow night, by the way. We'll be right back.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

SHIMON PERES, ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER: When it comes to Arafat, I'm really trying to see or think who should in the eyes of the other people replace him? Maybe there are other candidates to succeed him, but I don't think they will be

better or more promising. We can not force the Palestinians to change their leaders, but we have to press upon the Palestinians to change their policies.
(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Welcome back to a live edition of LARRY KING WEEKEND. We certainly thank our guests for coming in on Sunday evening. They are in New York. Ambassador Alon Pinkas, the Israeli Counsel General to the United States; in D.C. is **Hasan Abdel Rahman**, the Chief Palestinian Representative to the United States; in New York is George Mitchell, former Senate Majority Leader, chairman of Sharm al Sheik fact finding committee, who gave President Bush recommendations for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and he was the former peace negotiator in Northern Ireland; and also in Washington, Bob Schieffer, anchor and moderator of "Face the Nation with Bob Schieffer" and CBS News Chief Washington Correspondent.

Before we take some calls, Bob, do you think this is Arafat versus Sharon?

SCHIEFFER: Well, I think that's a part of it. I mean anybody who's covered politics as I have knows that they are sometimes friendly. Enemies, people like Everett Dirksen and Lyndon Johnson would go at each other out on the Senate floor and then they'd have a drink in the evening. There are also people who don't like each other. Bobby Kennedy and Eugene McCarthy for example, Trent Lott and John McCain for example.

So it goes back and forth, but these two men have been very involved in the politics of their countries for a long, long time and my guess is that this goes beyond the personal dislike, which I'm sure they have for each other. My guess is that both believes that he is doing what's in the best interest of those he represents, but I don't think there's any question, personalities do play a part in these things.

KING: Tampa, Florida as we go to calls. Hello.

Page 380

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday

CALLER: Yes, Larry, my question for you panel is, if a Middle East peace plan is worked out, do they feel the United States will have to put together a coalition in order to maintain that plan and keep the peace?

KING: Mr. Rahman, do you think the United States will have to be there?

RAHMAN: I believe the United States can play a very, very important role. I think the outline is...

KING: The question is, if they work something out, do you think the United States would have to be involved, say on the site?

RAHMAN: I think the involvement of the United States on the site would be very, very helpful because obviously the two parties trust the United States and they want the United States to be involved. Now in order to get there, this is the issue.

As Senator Mitchell said, the first step, the first step is leading, for the Palestinians to see that there is a light at the end of the tunnel, that there will be an end of their tragic life and Israel's occupation for 35 years. Is it going to come to an end or not? That is the question that every Palestinian asks. Give me -- tell me that it is going to happen within one year, and I will work with you.

But don't tell me I will engage you in a process that will get you in a tunnel and at the end of the first tunnel, you find another tunnel. That is not going to work with the Palestinians. We feel that 35 years of foreign, illegal occupation is more than enough. We need our God given right to live as a free people in our own state, next to Israel, on the West Bank and Gaza. We don't ask for one inch beyond the West Bank and Gaza, the 1967 boundaries.

KING: There was occupation before the 35 years too, wasn't there Mr. Rahman?

RAHMAN: No, there was not.

KING: There was not, OK.

RAHMAN: I mean I don't consider Egypt administration, because Egypt did not build Egyptian settlements in the Palestinian territories and Jordan did not bring Jordanian ...

KING: But they occupied it?

RAHMAN: They were administering it. Israel -- the problem here is that Israel brought 300,000 Jews in the West Bank only since the Sharon election. We have 34 Jewish settlements. That's why I asked Mr. Pinkas whether they'll really accept the Mitchell Plan, which calls for cessation of all settlement activities.

KING: Mr. Pinkas, would you accept American armed forces on the scene?

PINKAS: Well, I think that's something, that's a component that should be looked at at the end of the process. It can not be a substitute to bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. I think that the U.S.

Page 381

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday
involvement here is critical.

I think that the U.S. is indeed, as Bob Schieffer said, a super duper power, and it's also an indispensable nation, and whatever other term you choose to brand it. I think it best, it would be best to leave that issue to the end of the process, rather than the beginning.

KING: Mr. Mitchell, is Mr. Rahman correct? Was it the settlements that increased and heightened this problem?

MITCHELL: Well, it's a part of the problem, Larry, of course. They've developed very rapidly over the past several decades, and it is highly -- it's a realistic and a highly emotional issue from the Palestinian standpoint, but it is not the only issue. There are several other issues.

I believe that if they can get to negotiations on the final status issues, they will resolve the issue of settlements. I think that the tougher issue will be the right of return, and how to deal with Jerusalem. I think they'll be able to resolve them all, painful as it will be, but getting to that point I think is the most difficult thing.

KING: Corvalis, Oregon, hello.

CALLER: Hello.

KING: Hi.

CALLER: My question is for Mr. Mitchell.

KING: Yes.

CALLER: First of all, I really like your peace agreement, and I'd like to find out, aren't you worried about the violence in the Middle East coming to America if we don't stop funding the Israel oppression of the Palestinian people?

MITCHELL: Well, of course, we've already had a lot of violence in America. We had 19 suicide bombers on September 11, killing nearly 3,000 Americans, and we had prior incidents as well.

I think we do have an interest in resolving the situation in the Middle East from our own perspective, and it includes the possibility of further attacks on the United States, but I don't think that's the only basis on which we should be involved, and I think we should be seeking a settlement, which gives the two parties what they want.

And that leads me to a point, Larry, that should be made. One of the problems with resolving this is that the objectives of the two parties are not identical. The Israelis have a state. They want security. Security is the

number one, two, three, four, five and so on down the line issue for the Israelis. The Palestinians don't have a state and they want one, and they want it be economically viable and geographically contiguous, and because ...
KING: And both are not accomplishable?

Page 382

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday

MITCHELL: I believe they are accomplishable. I believe they are and the United States supports both aspirations. But bringing these two objectives, which are not identical, into alignment is extremely difficult, particularly in the atmosphere that exists now.

KING: Bob Schieffer, do you think the attack of September 11 heightened awareness so much that more Americans are now interested in this situation than may previously have been interested?

SCHIEFFER: Oh, I don't think there's any question of that, but I think the caller raises a very interesting point, Larry, and that is, we have to somehow find a way to remove terrorism as an option. If terrorism succeeds in the Middle East, then it's going to succeed everywhere and no one will be safe, and I think that is just an added reason for the United States to continue the push to try to find some kind of settlement.

George Mitchell is also absolutely right, I think, and that is the first step is going to be the hardest step, but we have to work toward a deal that is a good deal for both sides, because if it's not a good deal for both sides, it's not going to work.

You can't shove something down either side's throat, and make that the lasting agreement. It has to be something that both sides can live with. Both sides have to be secure.

KING: We'll take a break. We'll be back with more. More phone calls as well. Don't go away.

(BEGIN VIDEO CLIP)

ERAKAT: President Arafat, with whatever limited means he has, is not going to only do his best to reign in people who are not part of his organization, but he would do everything possible to stop all violence, once a cease-fire is agreed, once the Israelis for once comply with what President Bush has been telling them. Get out now.

(END VIDEO CLIP)

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Another call for our panel, Montreal, hello.

CALLER: Hi, Larry. Mr. Rahman, why is it so difficult for Arafat to publicly denounce terrorism in Arabic on the air to his people?

RAHMAN: Well, he did that in fact yesterday. But he also delivered a speech in Arabic on December 16th to his people, in which he asked to stop any violence against civilians, and he extended a hand of peace to the Israelis. The other speech he made in Arabic, which was broadcast in all our television stations was on the 28th of March, about two weeks ago to the Arab Summit in Beirut. So Yasser Arafat is on record that he has condemned terrorism. He took action against terrorism, and he opposes terrorism. The question is the following, that today the Palestinian people are under military occupation.

Page 383

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday

KING: All right, I don't want to be repetitive. Those points have been solidly made.

RAHMAN: No. No. What I'm saying that can Yasser Arafat, what can Yasser Arafat tell his people today if every one of them is under a state of siege.

KING: A state of siege. Ambassador Pinkas, Condoleezza Rice, the national

security adviser, said that humanitarian workers have to be allowed into the Jenin refugee camp. There's been back and forth over what happened there and what started it. Are you going to let them in?

PINKAS: Absolutely. What's been stopping them from getting in until now is the fact that the Palestinians booby-trapped many buildings, including buildings incidentally in which families, whole families, entire families were still in rooms.

They have booby-trapped the entrances to allies. They have booby-trapped garbage cans. They have booby-trapped an ambulance. So it's going to take -- it took us time before we could clear those buildings and those access roads, in order to allow for the humanitarian aid to pass.

KING: When will this happen?

PINKAS: I think that it already began, and I think that it will be increased in the upcoming days and weeks.

KING: Dallas, Texas, hello.

RAHMAN: Larry.

KING: I'll have you respond in a minute, Mr. Rahman.

RAHMAN: Thank you.

KING: Dallas, Texas, hello.

CALLER: Yes, how are you gentlemen.

KING: Hi.

CALLER: I have just to make, I just want to make a statement. Since I've been watching this, I have lost all respect for all of the news anchors in America, and I want to say to Mr...

KING: Go ahead, why? What's the point ma'am? Hold it. Where's the call? Why? Where did the call go? All right. Why did we drop that? Mr. Schieffer, there's been a lot of criticism of television news anchors in America. I guess she was leading to this, being partial in this. How do you respond?

SCHIEFFER: It's a very, very difficult issue and I have yet to be on a broadcast. I have yet to do a story about this that I did not get criticism. But I must say, I get just as much from one side as I do to the other in this, and I think it just underlines and illustrates what a difficult problem this is.

Page 384

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday

This is an issue where people on both sides have, well to say strong views would be to put it mildly. This is just a tough one and it's why the situation is where it is, because people have very different views about it.

KING: Mr. Rahman, you want to respond to the statement about Jenin.

RAHMAN: Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. You know, I have heard liars in the past, but like Mr. Pinkas I have never seen, because he is accusing us of killing our own people for heaven's sake.

KING: Right, that's what he is.

PINKAS: Exactly, Mr. Rahman.

RAHMAN: Absolutely -- no. Mr. Pinkas, you...

PINKAS: Exactly, Mr. Rahman.

RAHMAN: You are an absolute liar, and I don't hesitate to tell you this on television, because you are telling...

PINKAS: Don't lose your temper because you're losing the war, Mr. Rahman.

RAHMAN: I'm not losing my temper. If you were like...

PINKAS: Mr. Rahman, for 70 years you're losing your temper.

RAHMAN: Let me finish. Let me finish.

PINKAS: Don't do it again, Mr. Rahman.

RAHMAN: Let me finish. I let you finish, even when you were cursing us.

RAHMAN: No, I was not cursing you.

RAHMAN: Let me finish.

KING: Are you denying that, Mr. Rahman?

RAHMAN: Let me finish.

KING: OK.

RAHMAN: Let me finish. If you were right, why didn't you let the media get in? Why did you -- I listened today to Jessie Caballe (ph) from the International Red Cross and she said what Israel committed is war crimes in the Palestinian refugee camp of Jenin, and Mr. Sharon (UNINTELLIGIBLE) and you, prime minister, have to be brought to justice as war criminals for the killing of Palestinian civilians. I tried to avoid dealing with this issue on this show tonight.

PINKAS: How nice of you.

RAHMAN: But you pushed me to tell you that you are a liar period.

Page 385

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday

KING: Hold on, before we get into personalities. I want to ask George Mitchell and Bob Schieffer about Jenin as well. We're going to take a break. We'll be right back. Don't go away.

(COMMERCIAL BREAK)

KING: Before we take another call, Senator Mitchell, what about this case that was just discussed by our two friends concerning Jenin?

MITCHELL: I don't know what happened there, Larry, and I think that you and I and Bob will probably have to await more information before making a judgment on it. I have no way of assessing the respective claims made. I'll just say the discussion points up the need to hold negotiations in private.

I know you and Bob are members of the news media and you look everything out in the open and I commend you for this kind of show, which gives people a chance to express their views directly to the public. But you have to conduct negotiations and meetings in private, so that you can get past this kind of exchange and get to really the issues that you're trying to reach in a negotiation.

KING: Bob, do you know more about it than Senator Mitchell?

SCHIEFFER: Well, I would -- Senator Mitchell may be surprised that I agree with him. I think there are certain negotiations that have to be conducted in public. The founding fathers did very well writing the Constitution in private. So some things are done, need to be done in private.

I would just say this about what's going on in Jenin. We don't know what's going on there and it would seem to me that it would be in the interest of both sides to have a third party, and that would be journalists, the media, to come in and take a look at what's going on.

It seems to me when reporters are allowed to come in and be on the scene, it adds credibility to whatever story that either side is trying to tell. Then the public, of course, will start jumping on us instead of jumping on them. But I think it would be a healthy thing if we were allowed in.

KING: Seattle, Washington, hello.

CALLER: Hi, why doesn't Secretary of State Colin Powell go to Jenin because he can actually see what's actually happening on the ground?

KING: Mr. Rahman?

RAHMAN: Well, we extend an invitation to Secretary Powell to go to Jenin if the Israelis, of course, allow him to because they have prevented everyone else from arriving into Jenin, everyone else. By the way, today there was an article by James Bennett (ph) in the "New York Times" describing what the destruction the Israelis done in Jenin, and he did not mention once the booby-traps that Mr. Pinkas is alleging that we have. He spent three hours in Jenin yesterday.

KING: There were, Ambassador Pinkas, though many demonstrations in Jenin, weren't there, anti-American, anti-Israeli demonstrations?

Page 386

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday

PINKAS: Of course. You're looking at a city -- we're talking about a city, and incidentally not dissimilar from Arafat's compound, in which people were shooting in the air and joyously throwing candy at each other on 9/11. You're talking about a people who have established a political culture of murder and homicide bombings.

You're talking about a political culture that is so alien to the values that we share with the United States, democracy, freedom, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. Look at the -- did you ask yourself once why is there a refugee camp in the city of Jenin?

For God sakes, where is the Saudi money? Where's the money that was funneled into the Palestinian Authority since the Oslo process began? Why have these people not been built -- not been given better housing, medical care, supermarkets, Kindergartens, schools, basketball courts?

I'll tell you why, because the money was used to fund, to finance and to lubricate an entire, corrupt...

KING: Mr. Rahman.

RAHMAN: Yes, I want to...

KING: Want to respond to that? We're running short of time.

RAHMAN: Yes. Yes. First of all, you know, I would like to tell Mr. Pinkas in our region was introduced by the Israelis. Remember that your two prime ministers...

PINKAS: You're the only person who turns ignorance into a virtue, Mr. Rahman.

RAHMAN: Shamir and Menachem Begin were both on the most wanted list for terrorism.

PINKAS: I advised you on a previous show to read history.

RAHMAN: Let me -- you read history too. Those two people were indicted for terrorism, one for blowing up a hotel and the other for killing an international (UNINTELLIGIBLE).

Second, you occupied the West Bank for 35 years. You did not allow the building of one single classroom, Mr. Pinkas. That's why we have said, those refugees they are in a camp because they were expelled from their villages and towns in Palestine where you brought instead of them immigrants from Brooklyn, New York, from Russia and from Argentina, and maybe yourself. I don't know where you were born?

KING: Where did the Saudi money go, though? Where did the Saudi money go?

RAHMAN: The Saudi money went into building in seven years with the admission of the International Monetary Fund, one of the most efficient educational systems in the Middle East. Listen, we, in spite of Israel...

KING: Senator Mitchell -- all right. Senator Mitchell, we will do a lot more

Page 387

CNN LARRY KING WEEKEND 21:00 April 14, 2002 Sunday

on this. We're going to concentrate on it all week long. Senator Mitchell, do you see any light at the end of the tunnel? We're less than a minute.

MITCHELL: I do, Larry.

KING: You do?

MITCHELL: It's very dark now. It's very difficult, but they're going to eventually come back to the negotiating table, and I just hope it's before more people are needlessly killed.

KING: Bob, based on Ambassador Pinkas and Mr. Rahman, do you see any light?

SCHIEFFER: No, but I see some light in the fact that Secretary Powell did go

to the region today. The United States is involved. This is a step. It's a tiny step, but at least it's a step.

KING: Thank you all very much. Ambassador Alon Pinkas, **Hasan Abdel Rahman**, the chief Palestinian representative, Senator George Mitchell, the former Senate majority leader, and Bob Schieffer of CBS News.

Stay tuned now for LIVE FROM JERUSALEM with Bill Hemmer. He and Wolf Blitzer seem to be around the clock there. Wolf's going to have Prime Minister Sharon with him tomorrow on a special edition of "WOLF BLITZER REPORTS." And we'll see you tomorrow night covering more of the same. Good night. TO ORDER A VIDEO OF THIS TRANSCRIPT, PLEASE CALL 800-CNN-NEWS OR USE OUR SECURE ONLINE ORDER FORM

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